

WDNR Pheasant Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 28, 2019
9:00 AM- 12:30 PM
State Game Farm
N3344 Stebbins Rd.
Poynette, WI 53955

Attendance

- Mark Witecha, DNR
- Alaina Gerrits, DNR
- Chris Pollentier, DNR
- Kevyn Quamme, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF)
- Burt Bushke, Wings over Wisconsin (WoW)
- Harold Drake, Friends of Poynette Game Farm
- Kelly Maguire, DNR
- James Christopher, DNR
- Dean Edlin, DNR
- Jason Cotter, DNR

Status of Pheasant Stamp Allocations FY20/21

- Typically, there is approximately \$400,000 available for allocation, this year there is ~\$490,000
- ~\$31,500 will be automatically allocated to the central office coordination of the pheasant management program and ~\$166,500 will be automatically allocated to the farm bill biologist program
- That leaves ~\$292,000 for stamp project allocations
- The bureau of wildlife management did not take their normal allocations for habitat improvement projects, instead they'll be drawing from Pittman-Robertson funds
- No longer a formal scoring sheet for ranking projects, instead the advisory committee will discuss and make recommendations. After the advisory committee has made decisions on which projects to fund the wildlife leadership team will review the decisions and make revisions or approve allocations

Stamp Project Applications

1. DNR/NHC: Pheasant habitat development and restoration in west-central WI
 - a. Acreage affected: 522 – encompassing several state natural areas
 - b. Properties hold populations of wild pheasants
 - c. Within pheasant priority area
 - d. Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries
 - e. Permanently protected and open to public hunting
 - f. Habitat management plan: area includes prairie remnants, management would invigorate existing areas, planting native grass species, invasive plant control,

- g.** Total cost is ~\$20,000
 - i.** Stamp request \$15,000: \$11,000 for LTEs and \$4,000 for supplies
 - ii.** Cost share ~\$4,000
 - iii.** Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$28.74/acre, for total project cost: \$40/acre
- h.** They will accept partial funding

- a.** Acreage affected: 300 – encompassing private lands, lands open to public hunting, some lands with WoW permanent easement
- b.** Supports wild and game farm pheasants
- c.** Within pheasant priority area
- d.** Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries (Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA), WoW lands, etc.)
- e.** Some public land open to hunting, some land opened to public hunting with restrictions and some land is completely private
- f.** Habitat management plan: establish native prairies on marginal farmland areas, cooperate with private landowners to convert unproductive areas, more direct input from private landowners will help with involvement and maintaining habitats into the future
- g.** Total cost is ~\$20,000
 - i.** \$10,000 requested from stamp funds, \$10,000 cost share
 - ii.** Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$33/acre, for total project cost: \$66/acre
- h.** They will accept partial funding

- a.** Acreage affected: 450 acres total – 100 acres of public land and 350 acres of private land
- b.** Supports wild and game farm pheasants
- c.** Within pheasant priority area
- d.** Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries (Southwest grassland initiative, etc.)
- e.** Some land is open to public hunting, some is completely private
- f.** Habitat management plan: currently idle or active pasture land will be converted to prairies and grasslands, expand habitat, engage private landowners to improve habitat and maintain habitat treatments into the future, seeding short native grasses, herbicide application, prescribed fire, brush control, committing landowners to a 10-year plan (longevity)
- g.** Total cost is ~\$96,000
 - i.** \$39,400 requested from stamp funds (\$5,000 for supplies, \$35,000 for contracting services such as prescribed fire, \$4,400 indirect costs such as fuel and equipment maintenance), \$46,000 cost share
 - ii.** Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$98/acre, for total project cost: \$202/acre

- [illegible]

- d.** Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries (Conservation opportunity areas, GHRA, Mississippi River Basin Initiative, etc.)
 - e.** Some land is open to public hunting through VPA-HIP, some is public land open to public hunting, some is completely private
 - f.** Primary focus is habitat management, but they are also proposing workshops, and demonstrations also hunting recruitment and retention opportunities. Habitat management includes: identifying agricultural areas of low productivity and enrolling them in programs such as CRP that will create wildlife habitat while also benefitting the farmer, plan on focusing on state-owned areas with active share-cropping, but also will incorporate private farms. Priority areas will be agricultural areas adjacent to herbaceous cover, riparian zones, marsh/wetland cover or grasslands. Studies show on average 20% of farmland is unproductive also long-term market productions estimate less than favorable crop prices, making this program more attractive to farmers. Implement enhanced agricultural to benefit wildlife: diverse cover cropping, full season cover cropping, planting hay or pasture. This project addresses objectives laid out in the 2013 national pheasant management plan. Another benefit would be access to sophisticated software and equipment for land use planning on small scale family farms that otherwise would not have access to.
 - g.** Total cost is ~\$393,000
 - i.** \$149,000 requested from stamp funds (2 precision ag. Staff members), ~\$244,000 cost share
 - ii.** Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$62/acre, for total project cost: \$164/acre
 - iii.** Note: this project is also actively seeking funding from NRCS and the same project is being presented for turkey stamp allocation
 - h.** They will accept partial funding
- 7. Pheasants Forever: Restoration on Special Interest Properties**
- a.** Acreage affected: 385 ac. public land (encompasses several PF “adopt a wildlife area” properties)
 - b.** Supports wild and game farm pheasants
 - c.** Within pheasant priority area
 - d.** Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries (PF adopt a wildlife area, etc....)
 - e.** All permanently protected and open to public hunting
 - f.** Habitat management plan: jump-start habitat initiatives already put in place by PF local chapters, some work has already begun, herbicide applications, forestry mowing, prescribed fires, seeding, PF chapters will continue to monitor habitat into the future
 - g.** Total cost is ~\$227,000
 - i.** \$190,000 requested from stamp funds (contract burning crews, mowing, herbicide app.), ~\$36,000 cost share (volunteer hours)
 - ii.** Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$500/acre
 - h.** They will accept partial funding

- i. There were 11 example projects, all small scale and most included brush removal, herbicide application, prescribed fire, girdling and stump management, seeding native grasses, etc. Most are managing woody encroachment on already grassland habitats
- 8. Natural Heritage Conservation: Southwest Grassland Habitat Restoration
 - a. Acreage affected: 1500 ac. public land (mostly State Natural Areas)
 - b. Supports wild pheasants
 - c. Within pheasant priority area
 - d. Falls within several other state/federal habitat project boundaries (Wildlife Action Plan, etc....)
 - e. All permanently protected and open to public hunting
 - f. Habitat management plan: conduct grassland habitat restoration, prairie planting, tree clearing, prescribed grazing, mowing invasive species, prescribed fire
 - g. Total cost is ~\$53,000
 - i. \$30,000 requested from stamp funds (\$18,000 for hiring LTEs, \$12,000 for fuel, mileage, herbicides, equipment maintenance, ~\$23,000 cost share (match LTE wages, supplies, contract for mowing, volunteer labor)
 - ii. Cost per acre with stamp funds: \$20/acre, total cost: \$36/acre
 - h. They will accept partial funding

The Advisory Committee's Recommendations for Allocation:

- There is ~\$490,000 for allocation - \$166,500 for farm bill biologist program and - ~\$31,500 for central office coordination of the program, that leaves: ~ **\$292,000** for allocation
- **The committee decided to fully fund projects 1-5 and 8**
 - 1. DNR/NHC: Pheasant habitat development and restoration in west-central WI
 - 2. Wings over Wisconsin: Native prairie restoration project
 - 3. Driftless Area Land Conservancy- Public/private lands habitat improvement
 - 4. Pheasants Forever: #254 Rock River and Footville Wildlife Area Habitat Improvement
 - 5. Pheasants Forever: Marquette/Columbia counties
 - 8. Natural Heritage Conservation: Southwest Grassland Habitat Restoration
- **The committee decided not to allocate any funds to proposal 6-** Pheasants Forever: Precision Agriculture for Habitat Enhancement on Public and Private Land
 - a. The committee felt that focusing precision agriculture on state lands with sharecroppers is inefficient because for most land managers the end goal is to convert lands back to native habitat and utilizing sharecropping tends to be a tool in the first step of conversion by clearing the land
 - b. The committee felt this may be more effective on private lands where the primary land use is agriculture, and those types of properties typically do not create hunting opportunities for the public, thus it may be a less-effective use of funds
 - c. The committee felt the price per acre was high, especially considering the habitat impacted will be fine scale

- d.** With this being a pilot project, the committee felt the longevity of these positions is unclear
 - e.** The committee felt that the farm bill biologists who are already considered in the budgeting of stamp funds are already able to assist farmers with these types of habitat projects
 - f.** Overall the committee decided this project does not clearly align with the goals of the pheasant stamp program and will not be funded
- **The board decided to partially fund proposal 7- Pheasants Forever: Restoration on Special Interest Properties**
 - a.** The committee decided to fund **\$164,100** of the \$190,000 requested
 - b.** The committee noted that this habitat project had a higher cost per acre than most others, also this project was most appropriate to partially fund because it is a group of separate smaller projects that can easily be divided

Agency	Project Title	Cost-Share	Stamp Allotment	Project Type
Wings Over Wisconsin	Wings Over Wisconsin's Native Prairie Restoration Project	\$10,000	\$10,000	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
Driftless Area Land Conservancy	Public/Private Partnership to Improve Pheasant Habitat in SW WI	\$46,560	\$44,400	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
Pheasants Forever #254 Rock River Valley	Habitat Improvement in Rock County and Footville Wildlife Area	\$63,600	\$8,500	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
Pheasants Forever, Marquette/Columbia Co. Chapter	Habitat Improvement in Columbia/Marquette Co	\$114,700	\$20,000	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
Pheasants Forever	Pheasant Habitat Restoration on Special Interest Properties	\$32,625	\$164,100	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
WDNR-NHC	Pheasant Habitat Development and Restoration in West Central WI	\$4,960	\$15,000	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
WDNR-NHC	Southwest Grasslands Habitat Restoration	\$23,040	\$30,000	Habitat Development, Management, Restoration and Maintenance
Total	8 projects	\$295,485	\$292,000	

Partner Updates

- Conservation Congress spring hearing- pheasant questions
 - **Rule change passed-** setting a 12:00PM hunting closure on those stocked properties to allow staff ample time to release pheasants and allows pheasants a resting period before the resumption of hunting
 - **Rule change passed-** requiring small game hunters (specifically quail, pheasant and grouse hunters) to wear blaze orange or pink while hunting
 - Because this rule requires a legislation change most likely we will not see this come into effect until Fall 2020
- State game farm updates
 - Considerable chick loss in first hatch due to incorrect diet
 - Affected several Day-Old-Chick farms as well
 - Goal this year is to release 75,000 pheasants as well as 1,000 for Learn to Hunt programs and 250 hens allocated to dog training programs
 - Continuing holiday pheasant stocking due to high popularity (2,000 birds released)- high hunter participation led to competition among hunters and low satisfaction rates
- Friends of Poynette state game farm
 - Friends of Poynette continue to supplement game farm staff with volunteers
 - Conducting trap shoot to raise money
 - 8 learn to hunt events scheduled (2 added this year)
- Wings over WI
 - 60 newly acquired acres undergoing cedar management
 - Popular food plot program underway (corn, sorghum, sunflowers and soybeans available)
 - 70 acres of WoW land recently converted to monarch butterfly habitat
 - Ongoing wetland restoration project in Dane county
- Wi Wildlife Federation
 - Continues to work on legislative needs
- WDNR- Janesville
 - Currently converting acres of sharecropped land back into permanent grasslands
- NHC
 - Busy with burning season
- OAS
 - Spring crow count surveys indicate a 14.5% increase compared to the 5-year average
 - 83 total survey routes, 15 stops ea., stops are at least 1 mile apart, 6 minutes long (4- 1.5 minute periods), this information allows us to create detection probability estimates
 - The highest crow counts occurred in west central WI
 - Good brooding conditions in 2018
- DNR- Rock and Green counties
 - Recently hired a full-time technician and 2 LTE employees (now fully staffed)

- >9000 acres of VPA land in Green county (out of 35,000 acres statewide)
- Starting to initiate sharecrop conversions
- Recently cut a 100-acre Christmas tree farm to start conversion back to native habitat

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